

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1521

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UY

SUBJECT: TENSION EASES IN ERRO CASE

REF: MONTEVIDEO 1508

1. LAST MINUTE EFFORT TO FIND AT LEAST TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO ERRO CASE SUCCEEDED AT MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT (MAY 18) IN AVERTING IMMEDIATE SHOW- DOWN BETWEEN EXECUTIVE- MILITARY AND LEGISLATURE. FOLLOWING INTENSE NEGOTIATIONS AND MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND LEADERS OF HIS " NATIONAL ACCORD" COALITION, COLORADO UNR DEPUTY CARLOS FLEITAS SUBMITTED IMPEACHMENT CHARGES AGAINST ERRO IN LOWER CHANBER. MOVE BY FLEITAS THEREUPON ENABLED SENATE TO APPROVE BY NEAR

LY

UNANAMOUS VOTE RESOLUTION DECLARING THE SENATE " DECLINES COMPETENCE"

TO RULE ON EXECUTIVE' S REQUEST THAT IT LIFT ERRO' S CONGRESSIONAL IMMUNITIES.

2. IMPEACHMENT CHARGES MUST NOW BE INVESTIGATED BY CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES WHICH CAN APPROVE THEM BY SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE. CASE THEN MOVED TO SENATE FOR " TRIAL". TWO- THIRDS VOTE IN THAT BODY WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR GUILTY VERDICT AND REMOVAL OF ERRO FROM SENATE MAKING HIS SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION FOR SEDITION.

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3. COMMENT: IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF CONGRESSIONAL MOVE LAST NIGHT IS TO BUY ADDITIONAL TIME IN CONSIDERATION OF ERRO CASE. PRESS TODAY COMMENTING THAT THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT ACTION ON IMPEACHMENT CHARGES WILL BE TAKEN "EXPEDITIOUSLY", WHICH MOST TAKE TO MEAN TWO TO THREE WEEKS. ACTION ALSO TENDS TO REFOCUS ATTENTION OF ERRO, RATH ER THAN ON BROADER ISSURE OF CONGRESSIONAL AUTONOMY. MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION TO AND CRITICISM OF MILITARY- INSPIRED REQUEST FOR ACTION AGAINST ERRO HAS BEEN BASED ON IDEA THAT ERRO IS SIMPLY PRETEXT BY MDMED FORCES TO DOWNGRADE AND DESTROY LEGISLATIVE BRANCH. NOW, HOWEVER, CONGRESS WILL UNDERTAKE ITS OWN INVESTIGATION AND AVIVE AT A RESULT BASED UPON ITS OWN ANALYSIS OF ERRO' S ACTIONS. OPPOSITION SENATOR FERREIRA ALDUNATE WARNED LAST NIGHT THAT HIS SECTOR' S APPROVAL OF SENATE RESOLUTION DID NOT REPRESENT ANY " PROMISE" WITH REGARD TO EVENTUAL VOTE ON IMPEACHMENT. HOWEVER, FACT THAT INITIATIVE IN ERRO MATTER HAS NOW PASSED FROM EXECUTIVE TO CONGRESS COULD RESULT IN SOFTENING OF HIS OPPOSITION. FINALLY, IT APPEARS THAT THREATENED RUPTURE IN PRESIDENT' S " NATIONAL ACCORD" COALITION HAS BEEN PUT OFF, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. ALL PRESS ACCOUNTS TODAY CARRY TONE OF ALMOST VISIBLE RELIEF, WITH LEFTIST DAILIES HAILING RESULT AS " GREAT VICTORY" FOR THEM.

4. UNKNOWN FACTOR AT THIS MOMENT IS THE REACTION OF THE ARMED FORCES TO LAST NIGHT' S EVENTS. THROUGHOUT THIS THREE- WEEK CRISIS, MILITARY CHIEFS HAVE CONTINUOUSLY MAINTAINED THAT THEY WOULD ARREST ERRO REGARDLESS OF CONGRESSIONAL ACTION. HAVING PUBLICLY DECLARED THEIR TOLERANCE WITH CONGRESS TO BE NEARLY AT AN END, THEY HAVE CLEARLY PUT THEIR PRESTIGE ON THE LINE. THE PROSPECT OF FURTHER DELAY IN THE ERRO CASE WILL PROBABLY EVOKE A STRONG REACTION WITHIN MILITARY RANKS FROM THOSE " HARD LINERS" WHO ALREADY FEEL THAT TOO MUCH TIME HAS BEEN WASTED. CLAIMS OF " VICTORY" BY THE LEFT WILL EXACERBATE THESE FEELINGS. THE NEXT FEW DAYS SHOULD SERVE TO CLARIFY HOW FAR THE ARMED FORCES BELIEVE THEY CAN GO IN ACCOMODATING TO THE SEARCH BY CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS FOR SOME GRACEFUL EXIT TO THIS VEXING AND DANGEROUS PROBLEM. ORTIZ

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